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Multi award-winning filmmaker creates breech pregnancy animation

An award-winning filmmaker has used animation to explore the choices women need to make when faced with the dilemma of a breech pregnancy.

Ellie Land, who is a senior lecturer in animation at Northumbria University, has written and directed an animated film called 'Breech' made in collaboration with Dr Rebecca Say at Newcastle Centre for Health Research.

Ellie, whose films have featured at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival and London's V&A Museum in the past, has written a script and co-designed two

female characters, Polly and Rachel, using Dr Say's research.

The aim of the animation – the first of its kind in the country – is to support women who are facing several choices, such as whether to allow an attempt at turning the baby in the womb, whether to elect for a Caesarean section or breech delivery.

It will be hosted on the NHS Choices website and will be available to an audience of millions.

Up to 4% of women in the UK experience breech birth at the end of pregnancy, where the baby is lying feet or bottom first, as opposed to the normal position which enables the baby to be born headfirst through the birth canal.

When Ellie first began working on the project she had just given birth and Dr Say was pregnant.

Ellie said: "You can often say a lot more in animation than you can in photographic work. It gets information across in a visual way, which isn't always possible through the written word either.

"Naturally, it's hard for a woman to imagine what giving birth is like if they haven't done it before. But by using women's real stories, alongside factual information, we have been able to communicate to the audience on a more emotive level.

"While they are being swept along by the story they are also taking in information which could be very useful to them."

Both characters in the film, Polly and Rachel, are distinct profiles based on Dr Say's research.

Polly is a first-time mum and nervous at the prospect of giving birth and Rachel is a single mum with two children already.

Ellie added: "They are two very different characters and the story has been helped greatly by Dr Say's detailed character profiles.

“Dr Say and I developed the characters together, looking at everything, including the types of houses they would live in.

“It was then down to me to bring these characters to life.”

Breech is common at the beginning of pregnancy, however as the baby grows and gets ready for labour it tends to turn itself around so that its head is in the correct position. Approximately three in every 100 babies are in the breech position at full-term.

Ellie has been lecturing in animation for five years, having taught at London College of Communication and the National Institute of Design in India.

Her films, which are represented by the British Council, have attracted a number of awards, commendations and special mentions from a variety of international film festivals.

She recently completed a post graduate certificate in learning in teaching with University of the Arts London and currently teaches Animation into the Visual Communication Area at Northumbria School of Design.

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